



Title: Some Thoughts on Stones and Sacred Sites

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Some Thoughts on Stones and Sacred Sites

by David Peat

It is remarkable that North America is scattered with sacred sites, sacred rocks and rock paintings. The question arises as to what these sites mean and how rock markings are to be interpreted. Why put them there and why?

Even more disturbing is the fact that similar stones, mounds and sites, and even similar markings are found throughout Europe and even as far away as India and China, as well as in other parts of the world

What are the meanings of these great sites? Why did early civilizations spend so much energy to build them? Why are they laid out with such accuracy? Why was it necessary to build them to such a scale and why are there so many of them; i.e., why duplicate an accurate observatory?

Scientists and archeologists have offered a number of explanations. One is that many stone circles are astronomical observatories and it is certainly true that they show accurate astronomical alignments.

But why were they built? It is too far fetched to suppose that such vast and complex undertakings by a society with a sophisticated knowledge of surveying and astronomical arithmetic should have built them simply to discover when to plant crops! Were they perhaps built to acknowledge the great powers and movements of the heavens? Were they an expression of "as above, so below", i.e., a representation on earth of the dynamics of the heavens? Or were they built so that people could move through them and celebrate and participate in the actual movement and power of the cosmos? Or were they points of focus for certain "energies", psychic amplifiers as it were? Who knows? One promising track would be to discover the meaning of these sites from elders in, e.g., North America and Australia who are still part of a living oral tradition.

The notes below are some reflections on ancient mounds, stones, etc. They are approached only from a Western scientific perspective:

1. Megalithic Yard

In the 1950s Dr. Alexander Thom, a professor of engineering at Oxford University, made highly accurate surveys of over 600 megalithic sites in Britain and France. His significant

discovery was that all these sites were built on the basis of a common unit of measurement--the megalithic yard--of 2.72 feet (to an accuracy of 0.003). He discovered that many sites were constructed with a veery high degree of surveying skill and that the same unit of length was used throughout Europe to a high degree of accuracy. It raises the question of how and why sites that are vast distances apart in space (and time) should all be constructed according to the same measure. Admittedly a human stride is under 3 feet and a natural unit--but not to such accuracy.

There is now independent statistical evidence that Thom is correct and that a single standard of measurement extended over Europe in megalithic times.

(Question: Is this unit of measure found in North American sites? Note: It was known in Iberia and may then have been carried as the more modern "vara" to South America in post Columbian times. The evidence would therefore have to be from pre-Columbian sites.)

The question is why and how? Were highly accurate length standards transported across Europe and handed down from generation to generation in the form of physical standards--like the French Meter that is kept in Paris? Or was the "yard" derived from some natural, and unknown, process? This is a mystery but it does suggest that the builders of these sites were highly skilled engineers capable of great precision.

Question: How was this information and surveying skill passed on? Were there special sites where teaching took place? Did people come from afar to learn how to carry out their building? And remember that some of these sites may not have been built in one generation-- Stonehenge was modified at a number of periods stretching over 1000 years. How was this information encoded and transmitted? Is there any evidence that the sites in North America are connected to those of Europe? (Of course astronomical observatories will always have similar shapes that are determined by the earth's relationship to sun and moon.)

See: "The place of astronomy in the ancient world", Proceedings of the Royal Society, 1972. Oxford U.P. 1973.

Alexander Thom, "Megalithic Sites in Britain", OUP 1967. "Megalithic Lunar Observatories", OUP 1971.

2. Ley Lines

In the 1920s Alfred Watkins, a psychic and amateur archeologist, had the vision that ancient sites in Britain were all connected by straight lines. Watkins called these "ley lines" and showed, for example, that the Glastonbury-Avebury ley line extended to St. Michael's Mount in

Cornwall and to Bury St. Edmunds. Often monasteries and churches were built on more ancient sites so Watkins began to look for leys that connected standing stones, churches, burial mounds, megalithic sites, ancient crossroads and sites with ancient names. Many of these were found--but some people objected that with so many ancient sites and stones in Britain it was simply a matter of chance that some of them would fall on straight lines.

Today Watkins is not taken seriously by archeologists. Some people have even associated these patterns of supposed lines with the patterns in Peru, with flying saucers, etc. It certainly attracts a lunatic fringe. Yet some of the major coincidences on ley lines are indeed persuasive. But why straight lines? And why were these lines extended for hundreds of miles?

3. Why do some things look alike?

To see a similar shape or structure in two distant cultures is often staggering. Why should this be, one asks? It must mean that these two cultures were in direct contact in megalithic times, one supposes. But this does not necessarily need to be the case. There are a number of other reasons why symbols and objects may look identical.

Nature's Design

Note how similar shapes occur throughout nature--in animate and inanimate forms. There are a number of books showing remarkable photographs where identical forms occur at different scales. Sometimes this is because a particular form is the result of simple cumulative growth. The famous Fibonacci spiral is found in a ram's horn, the seeds of a sunflower, etc. It is simply the result of any form of growth in which next year's growth is added to what went before. 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13.... Find any number by adding the previous two together--a universal law of growth.

Fibonacci spirals--and other forms that are related to the same mathematical sequence such as arrangements of certain tiles--are inevitable when growth or accumulation occurs in a particular way--it must always be so, it is a simple fact of the natural world and this accounts for the fact that similar shapes are seen at vastly differing scales throughout nature.

Other shapes have to do with nature's solutions to design problems--trees, river deltas, lungs, blood vessels all have a branching character. the shape of an egg is repeated throughout nature and in the domes of great buildings because it is the most elegant solution to maintaining strength in certain structures. Grains pack in a certain way before slipping, which means that the angles formed by a pyramid of sand will always be the same. There are a variety of other

instances in which such things as gravity, stress, wind, waves, etc., all impose design problems that nature, and humans, solve in the best way. For such reasons it is often the case that natural and human-made forms may resemble one another.

Human Representations

A further example would be a megalithic observatory--used to determine such things as the equinoxes, movements of the moon, etc. Observations will be made in similar ways--using stones or mounds as markers and as back sites and inevitably they will fall into a certain pattern. Anna Sofaer has also shown how the spiral naturally emerges from such a procedure. (This is not to say that there are not other meanings to the spiral.) In this way certain geometric arrangements, triangles, angles and shapes, appear to be universal and similar mathematics is found in widely different sites--they are all a response to the movement of the heavens.

Archetypes

Carl Jung offered yet another explanation--he held that certain symbols such as the circle, square, serpent that swallows its tail, etc.--together with figures such as the hero, virgin, all powerful father, destroying mother, etc., were universal, appearing at all times and in all cultures. He suggested that these were symbolic manifestations of archetypes that reside within the collective unconscious of the human race. for this reason similar dreams, stories and symbols are to be expected to surface across the world.

Recently I discovered a remarkable example of this. In my book *Synchronicity* I describe the physicist Wolfgang Pauli's great dream of the World Clock, a vision that is also recorded in a medieval manuscript. A film maker told me that he had heard a report of an identical dream that had occurred to an Inuit Shaman. Such synchronicities would not be considered at all unusual to Carl Jung.

Another case is that of alchemy which was much pursued in the Middle Ages and may have its origins in Sufi knowledge of the spirit. But there is a related spiritual alchemy in ancient China which speaks in terms of the circulation of energies through the spiritual body (as in Kundalini). Likewise one student of alchemy has suggested a deep connection between the alchemical process and the Peace Pipe of the Plains. To Jung there need not be direct physical connection of peoples to establish these parallels--they are all manifestations of the same archetypes.

To Jung the serpent and turtle mounds, rock images, etc., of North America would be manifestations of the collective unconscious and would also occur as far away as India and China. Yet to talk of archetypes and the collective unconscious is to beg the question. For in what sense are these images shared--are they inherited genetically within the brain, like an appendix in the body?

Are they somehow related to the actual architecture of the human brain?

Are they deep inherited memories from our common evolutionary past?

Or are these images communicated psychically?

Or could it be that mind is disembodied and distributed throughout nature--being focussed and unfolded in each individual?

Or do these images come from gods and spirits that enter the human mind?

Or could there be a common wisdom and knowledge within the human race that expresses itself in slightly different ways in different cultures?

Jung is not at all clear about this, his writings are often evasive with the same term being used in a number of different ways throughout the same article.

Are, for example, the Aztec and Egyptian pyramids evidence of direct contact and exchange of knowledge? Or could it be that they are manifestations of the same ancient knowledge and wisdom that is held within the human race? I don't think that Jung's archetypes take us far or deep enough--the question may be even more far reaching.

Certainly it is curious as to why standing stones are found throughout the world. Why serpent mounds can be found in different parts of the globe and why certain patterns found on rocks in North America are also found in India, Scotland, Australia, etc. The meaning of these marks is a deep question.

3. Energies

There is some speculation that mounds and rocks have to do with some sort of energy in nature. Below are few speculations:

Cosmic Energy

The whole universe is alive with flows and fluxes of energies. Our galaxy is threaded with vast magnetic fields that act to accelerate and channel cosmic rays. Gravitational vibrations may well be emitted from black holes and even from the centre of the galaxy. In addition electromagnetic radiation of all frequencies comes from the stars. Indeed every cubic centimeter

of empty space is packed with vibrating energy which could also be thought of as enfolded information about the whole universe.

Solar Energy

Fluxes of energy also occur at the level of our solar system--magnetic fields extend from the sun and from individual planets. Cosmic rays from far out in the galaxy spiral in towards the sun and earth. A solar wind of charged elementary particles streams out from the sun and, meeting the magnetic field of the earth, creates a great shock wave as well as a long trail that stretches out far behind the earth.

The sun itself is not a static furnace for its output of energy is constantly fluctuating. To begin with the sun actually "rings" like a great bell-vibrating and changing shape. Solar flares push out streams of elementary particles that race towards earth. Periodic sun spot activity also changes the nature and amount of radiation that reaches the earth.

Earth Energies

Our earth is therefore racing through an ever-changing bath of energy and radiation. Not only does this radiation change from day to day--with the rotation of the earth--and year to year--with the earth's movement around the sun. It also responds to cycles within the sun, to the change in gravitational force as the moon moves around the earth, to disturbances induced by the movements of planets and to the solar system's movement through the galaxy. So cycles upon cycles upon cycles affect the earth--and keep in mind that many of these cycles are not regular but are effected by other cycles and movements.

As to the earth itself--it has an outer magnetosphere that interacts with the sun's magnetic fields and solar wind. There are belts of charged particles, like the Van Allen belt, that circle high above the earth from pole to pole and produce the Northern Lights. There are various belts that reflect radio waves--but whose strength and height fluctuate from hour to hour, day to day, and season to season. There are the various cosmic rays that reach the earth's surface, and whose intensity also fluctuates with a variety of cycles.

Here on the surface of the earth we are subject to an ever-changing dance of electromagnetic fields and charged particles. There is even the Schumann resonance--a standing wave of electromagnetic energy that circles the surface of the earth at about 3-4 cycles/second. (Indeed some have speculated that these ELF's--extremely low frequency waves--have a biological significance,i.e., they may resonate with brain rhythms.)

Add to all this the fact that the earth itself is vibrating with shock waves produced by seismic stresses and one realizes that we live in a great bath of fluctuating energy and that the nature of these fluctuations are very much connected with arrangements of the heavens--sun, moon, planets and stars (i.e., our position with respect to the rest of the galaxy).

What's This Got to Do with Us?

Given that we live in a flux of energies, some of them cyclic, others ever changing, can this in any way affect our lives? this could happen in several ways. Energy fluxes could:

1. Affect the world's weather, temperatures, winds etc. Which in turn affects life on earth.
2. Certain patterns of energies could affect plant and animal life, such as growth, movements, migrations, etc. These, in turn, are observed by humans.
3. These energies could affect humans directly by
 - a) Cellular effects, or effects on the immune system; i.e., not sensed consciously, but through changes in the body.
 - b) Interaction with some special organ, or location, in the body; i.e., certain animals have, I believe, concentration of minerals which respond to the earth's magnetic field and thereby allow the bird or animals to orient.
 - d) Subtle effects are focussed or amplified by various natural phenomena such as rocks and rivers to the point where they can be "sensed" by humans.
 - e) Effects can be sensed only by very special individuals who become dowsers, priests or shamans.

What is the experimental evidence? Very, very controversial. I have visited laboratories and talked to sincere and careful scientists who have demonstrated repeatable human responses to electrical currents, low frequency radiation and electromagnetic fields. I have also talked to other scientists who have been unable to detect any effect at all. Certainly the anecdotal information is strong--as in reports of dowsing. Yet dowsers are also able to use maps and locate water and minerals without ever visiting the site--so their skills may have nothing whatsoever to do with energy fields. Other dowsers speak of spirals, spirals in DNA and in the fields of stones--what does all this mean?

Energy or Information?

It is important to make the distinction between a simple response to energy--such as the movement of a compass needle--and a response to the "information" within this flux; i.e., a

television set extracts the important information within a very weak signal. What counts is not the energy itself but its detailed subtle form. My guess would be that people are responding not to brute energies or radiation, but to very subtle forms and levels of information--information about the earth and cosmic orientations.

A Field of Information

In my recent book I have tried to tie in some ideas on electromagnetic processes in cells to the idea of global fields of information. I include the print-out of this.

Stones and Sites

A further possibility is that in some way this flux of information becomes localized, amplified and focussed within limited geographical regions. In these regions holy people, and possibly ordinary people, can sense some great force, spirit or intelligence--indeed they would ultimately be responding to the overall intelligence of the whole universe.

In addition to standing stones, mounds, long barrows, etc., there are also the Fairy Glens, Holy Wells and sacred woods that are found all over Britain. All suggest that a certain "force" or "spirit" may be associated with particular places on earth.

But how is this possible? Can an explanation be given at the purely "scientific" level? Take a rock that contains quartz. A quartz crystal is piezoelectric which means that when placed under pressure it will generate a considerable electrical potential--tens of thousands of volts. Suppose a deposit of quartz lies in the path of periodic seismic shock waves--the result would be a fluctuating electrical field in the area. Indeed a variety of speculations have been made about underground rivers, rocks and standing stones--i.e., that they amplify weak effects and generate fields that are detectable.

One theory is that carefully chosen stones are placed at a sacred site and amplify subtle effects to the point where they are detectable by ordinary, sensitive people. In this way the various sacred sites grew up--they were "beacons" and amplifiers of natural forces. But such arrangements also have astronomical significance, so presumably there would be some connection between earth and cosmic energies. All that is pure speculation--some sensitives report feeling electrical impulses. Others claim to have measured magnetic and electrical fields--but it is hard to rely upon anecdotes like this.

My own opinion is that there may well be some sort of response to the fact that we live in an ever changing electromagnetic flux. Life evolved under such conditions and may make use

of them. There may well be subtle ways in which we can communicate with the earth and listen to the cosmos. Indeed we may even be able to make use of these complex fields to communicate with each other. Moreover, since the fields on earth are the results of complex processes involving the planet, its interaction with the solar wind and sun, its perturbation by the planets and galactic effects, it is not unreasonable to suppose that this vast sea of energy-information contains within it patterns of the sun, moon, planets and cosmos.

But it is a major jump from such speculations to suggest that this is why the great stones and earthworks were constructed. There may be many other reasons. One should also listen to elders and oral historians who may have their own accounts of the meaning of the stones.